

(Washington, DC) - Today, Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez called on Congress to make truly equal pay for equal work a top priority by strengthening the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and endorsing the Paycheck Fairness Act in an effort to close the pay gap between men and women.

"I strongly support the Paycheck Fairness Act," said Congressman Rodriguez. "Equal pay is not just a women's issue, it's a family issue. By lowering family incomes available to pay for essentials - groceries, doctors' visits, child care -- the wage gap hurts everyone including husbands, wives, children, and parents. When women earn more, an entire family benefits."

Equal Pay Day marks the day that women "catch up" on the yearly wage gap. In 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed by President Kennedy, women who worked full-time year-round made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men. According to the 2006 Census Bureau, women last year earned 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. Statistics for women of color were far worse: Hispanic women earned only 55 cents on every dollar earned by men, and African American women made 66¢ on the dollar.

About the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2007:

- Requires the Department of Labor to enhance outreach and training efforts to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities;
- Prohibits employers from retaliating against employees who share salary information with their co-workers;
- Allows women to sue for punitive damages in addition to compensatory damages now available under the Equal Pay Act;
- Requires the Department of Labor to continue collecting and disseminating information about women workers; and
- Creates a new grant program to help strengthen the negotiation skills of girls and women.